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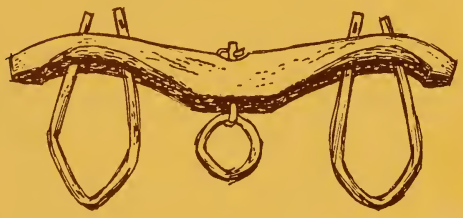

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TWO HOURS and TWO MINUTES

or

LINCOLN and EVERETT
at GETTYSBURG

By

BEVERLY W. HOWE

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By
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The Lincoln Group of Chicago is comprised of men who are Lincoln lovers and followers of the Lincoln trail. The group has about one hundred and forty members. They meet at least once a month at luncheon when there is a round table discussion or an address by a student of the life of Lincoln. Beverly W. Howe is a Chicago lawyer, lecturer and publicist. He is a member of the Lincoln Group and of the Abraham Lincoln Association. He is a Director of Lincoln Memorial University of Harrogate, Tennessee.

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AN ADDRESS

By

BEVERLY W. HOWE

Entitled

TWO HOURS AND TWO MINUTES

or

LINCOLN AND EVERETT AT GETTYSBURG

delivered before the Lincoln Group of Chicago November 18, 1937, on the eve of the seventy-fourth anniversary of the delivery of the Gettysburg Addresses.

AT GETTYSBURG, PA., on July 1, 2 and 3, 1863, there was fought a bitterly contested battle generally regarded as the turning point of the Civil War. General Lee's magnificent army of Northern Virginia, numbering about 70,000, was defeated by the Federal Army of the Potomac, commanded by General George G. Meade. The official estimate of the Union loss of men is 23,003, of the Confederate 20,451, including at least 2,500 of dead on each side. For the burial of the Union Soldiers who fell in the battle, a National Cemetery was soon planned and built on Cemetery Ridge in or close to the little town of Gettysburg. A man named Wills was designated by the Governor of Pennsylvania to act for him in the matter and the Governors of the other Union States appointed representatives who co-operated with Mr. Wills. They

decided that the grounds should be dedicated with imposing ceremonies. It came about then that on November 19, 1863, two great addresses, quite different in style and other characteristics, were delivered by two great men of different types who were also truly great orators of different schools of oratory.

It was the most natural thing for the committee to select as the orator of the day Edward Everett who was then regarded as the foremost orator in America. They set the date for the dedication as October 23, 1863, and sent an invitation to Mr. Everett some time in September. He notified them that owing to other engagements he would not have time adequately to prepare for such an occasion by that date but would be glad to accept if they would postpone the date so as to give him plenty of time to prepare. Accordingly the date was set for November 19, 1863, and Mr. Everett accepted. Before we go further we want to know more about this man Everett who was selected above all other speakers for this occasion and was so greatly desired that they postponed the date first fixed for it in order that he could be there.

Edward Everett was born on April 11, 1794, and was at this time in his seventieth year. He was born in Massachusetts and educated at Harvard where he had achieved boyish distinction as a poet and speaker. Graduating before he was twenty-one, he entered the ministry and immediately became greatly in demand as a pulpit orator.

Soon, however, he accepted an offer to become professor of Greek at Harvard, but entered on his duties only after extensive travel and study in Europe at the expense of the University. After a few years of successful work as a Greek professor, he entered politics and was elected to Congress, where he served for ten years. Then he was elected Governor of Massachusetts, serving four terms, finally being defeated by only one vote. Following this he went on another European travel tour which was interrupted by his being appointed Minister to the Court of St. James, where he served for several years with great satisfaction, both to the British and to Americans. Returning to this country, he was elected President of Harvard University. After a few years at this task, hardly relished by him, he was named, upon the death of his long time intimate friend, Daniel Webster, to succeed Webster as Secretary of State in President Fillmore's Cabinet. This was a national, and, indeed, an international distinction in itself—not only to be Secretary of State, but to succeed Webster in that position. He served with satisfaction and retiring from the office at the end of the term was soon elected to the Senate of the United States, from which, after a brief service, he retired to spend the remainder of his days in literary pursuits. In 1860 Everett was nominated for Vice-President by the Constitutional Union party and with John Bell, of Tennessee, as the candidate for President, ran against Lincoln, receiving

39 electoral votes. Such is a brief outline of the distinguished career of the man who most of us probably know merely as the man who delivered the two-hour address at Gettysburg when Lincoln delivered his immortal two-minute address of only 267 words.

Along with Webster, Everett was one of the greatest orators of his generation, and stands with Webster close to the top of a list of the ten or twelve outstanding American orators of all time. His name would very likely appear on any list intelligently selected of the fifteen or twenty of the world's all-time leading orators. It has been said of him that "as an orator for special occasions 'he had no rival near the throne, with the single exception of Daniel Webster'." He had delivered memorable orations on notable occasions, both in this country and abroad. Only a few years previous to the time of the Gettysburg dedication he had prepared and delivered in various parts of the country more than 100 times a great lecture on George Washington, the proceeds from which lecture had been contributed by him to the fund which helped make Mt. Vernon public property.

This man Everett, of course, prepared elaborately for his effort at Gettysburg which, in many ways, was to be, and, in fact, was a crowning climax of his long and eventful career. When he arose to speak, he laid on the table before which he stood his lengthy manuscript. He did not refer to it once, however. It is said that he always did

this when delivering addresses. Each of the 125 or so times he delivered his lecture on Washington he had his manuscript on the table, but never looked at it. He wanted his audience to realize that he had considered the occasion important enough to prepare thoroughly for it. He did not come before his audience with any apology about not being prepared.

Like many of our greatest orators, he used long sentences very frequently. This was one of his outstanding characteristics, as it was also of Webster, his intimate friend and contemporary. William Maxwell Evarts, a great lawyer and statesman and a great orator, who, among other distinctions, was Secretary of State under Hayes, on one occasion defended ably the long sentence. In an interesting biographical sketch of him, his son relates this incident. He said his "father's style of speech was long and pithy, driving on a whole flock of several clauses, before he came to the close of a sentence; so that when the copiousness of his style met not with proportionable capacity in his auditors, it was unjustly censured for 'perplexed, tedious and obscure'."

"Let us record here," he continued, "the witty retort of Mr. Evarts to one who, in good natured banter, had twitted him on his long sentences. In 1879, being then Secretary of State, he presided at the public dinner in New York tendered to Mr. Thomas Bailey Potter, one of the few members of parliament who had been, in England,

staunch supporters of the Northern side during the Civil War. Mr. Samuel I. Babcock, then president of the New York Chamber of Commerce, in closing his speech at the dinner, had thus expressed himself: 'Let us hope, gentlemen, that if differences should arise in the future between Great Britain and the United States, men will be found like Mr. Potter and Secretary Evarts, who, after a calm and dispassionate discussion, clothed though it be with sentences as long as the English language can supply, will arrive at an amicable settlement.' Mr. Evarts, on rising to introduce the next speaker, began by saying that the English was a language the true efficacy of which the gentleman who sat down did not seem to appreciate. Not only was it fine in quality but in quantity it was absolutely marvelous. What wonder, then, that a public servant should try to check the volubility of his countrymen by consuming large portions of it himself. He then added: 'I don't wish that our guest should carry away with him a wrong impression in regard to this alleged fault. The only persons in this country who are opposed to long sentences are the criminal classes'."

Mr. Everett would have concurred in Mr. Evart's statement. He knew the magic of verbiage. He was what many would now call a long-winded speaker. Some one has said that much energy may be saved by remembering that when a long-winded talker is telling a story it is not necessary really to start listening until he begins making

gestures. Another wit has said public speaking is the art of diluting a two-minute idea with a two-hour vocabulary. But these wise-cracks do not apply to Dr. Everett's address at Gettysburg. It was not too long. It would not have been acceptable if it had not been as long as it was —two hours. In that period of our history for such an occasion that was the appropriate length of the address of the day. His oration was planned along classical lines, as would be expected of a man of his education, experience and training and was delivered with poise, grace and effectiveness. He reviewed at some length the maneuvers of the two armies just previous to July 1st and then gave a graphic picture of the battle, or battles as he called them, from beginning to end. Then he indulged in a discussion of the causes of the war and the issues for which the Union Armies were fighting and ended, of course, with a tribute to those who had given up their lives for the Union cause. As I have referred to his use frequently of the long sentence, I would like, in this connection, to quote one of his very expressive short sentences. As a climax to his tribute to the dead soldiers, he said: "Would that the heartfelt tribute could penetrate these honored graves."

As the day for the Dedication ceremonies approached one of the Committee in charge suggested that possibly the President should be invited to make a few remarks. With cabinet members and other Governmental dignitaries, the President had received an invitation to attend and

had accepted. When the President's acceptance was received, this member of the committee expressed the thought that he ought to be asked to speak. Accordingly, about two weeks before the date for the meeting, in the name of the Governors of the States, President Lincoln was invited to speak and the invitation was "to set apart formally these grounds to their sacred use by a few appropriate remarks." Mr. Lincoln accepted and agreed to make the "few appropriate remarks" so definitely specified.

We need not here mention who Abraham Lincoln was, or recount his history previous to this occasion. He was chosen to make these "few appropriate remarks" because he was President of the United States, not because he was one of the greatest orators of that period. He was, however, a great orator, although his reputation in that field was not as extensive as that of Dr. Everett and his fame then did not, and now does not, rest to such a great extent upon his ability as a speaker as Dr. Everett's did then and does now.

Previous to this time in addition to his debates with Douglas and other political addresses, which had brought him fame and favor, he had delivered such really great addresses as the Cooper Union Speech and the "Divided House" Speech and the Speech to his friends and neighbors at Springfield on leaving for Washington to be inaugurated President. He knew how to prepare a speech.

He did not prepare the Gettysburg Address hastily on the train which carried him from Washington to Gettysburg, as has been many times erroneously asserted. He worked on it some en route, to be sure, but his preparation was by no means confined to that period of time.

Like many another great orator, he began preparing for a career of public speaking as a mere lad. In his book, entitled "Abe Lincoln, Kentucky Boy," page 116, Raymond Warren tells an interesting incident which proves this statement. Mr. Warren says:

> "After Abraham Lincoln's death, old Dennis Hanks, in recalling incidents in his illustrious cousin's boyhood, said: 'I'll tell you a peculiar circumstance about Abe. Back in Kentucky he would come home from church and put a box in the middle of the cabin floor and repeat the sermin clean through from text to doxology or sometimes give it outdoors, usin' a stump fer a pulpit. I heerd him do it many a time'."

Lincoln began his preparation of the Gettysburg Speech immediately after receiving the invitation to attend the Dedication and kept it up until long after the address had been delivered. I cannot prove these statements by living witnesses or documentary evidence, but I believe them to be true. They are true of all good speeches, addresses or sermons. Every good sermon you hear has been in the making a long time. Of course every sermon is not good, though it may be preached by a good man. Not so many

years ago I heard a sermon by a good man, but it was not a good sermon, though it had most commendable terminal facilities. I was visiting in a small town and went to church on Sunday. The telling of this incident is no reflection on the small town. All poor sermons are not preached in the small towns, nor all good ones in the big cities. I squared myself, as it were, to listen to this pastor as he took his text and started his address; but I could not gather from what he said what he was driving at, and I do not think he or even God Himself knew what point or points he was making. Now there was a clock in the court house tower in this town which could be heard all over the town when it struck the hours. All of a sudden, after I had been laboring with this man's remarks for 20 or 30 minutes, I heard the town clock strike twelve. Upon the twelfth stroke he suddenly closed the Bible and said, "There's twelve o'clock, let's go home and eat dinner."

Remarkable terminal facilities to be sure! And while the authorities all condemn an abrupt conclusion of an address I did not hear any objections to that part of this sermon. That good brother had not prepared his sermon —he was just talking until the clock struck twelve.

Yes, Lincoln began preparing as soon as he accepted the invitation to speak, if not sooner, when he knew he would attend and might therefore be called upon in view of his position. He may not until sometime thereafter have

actually put down on paper any of his thoughts but he was accumulating ideas to become a part of his written memorandum or manuscript later. Possibly while he was working on something else or listening to an address or reading a book or paper, he would see or hear something that he would think might fit into his "few appropriate remarks" to be made at Gettysburg. It is possible that many a time in church on Sunday a good speech is made at a banquet the following Saturday night by some man in the congregation, who appears to the preacher and choir to be paying strict attention to the sermon. And by the same token it is logical to believe that many a preacher, while attending a banquet on some week night, inspired and enthused by some thought advanced or words and phrases expressed by the speaker or speakers, takes home the material if not some of the sentences and paragraphs for his sermon the next Sunday or some other Sunday to follow.

Lincoln kept up his preparation of the speech too, until long after it had been delivered. He was human enough to have thought of some things after the speech had been delivered which he wished he had said. He rewrote the final manuscript of his Gettysburg Speech many days after it had been delivered and stenographic reports of it had been published, in order that posterity might read in it some things which had come to his mind after it had been delivered.

Now, briefly, let me give you some of the known facts about the preparation of the address. An advance copy of Dr. Everett's address which had been prepared, ready for the printers, long before the time of its delivery, had been sent to Mr. Lincoln soon after he had accepted the invitation to speak. He had read it and used it in his preparation for the occasion. On Sunday, November 8, while at a photograph gallery with some other men, having a picture taken, the President had the proof sheets of Everett's address and some paper on which evidently he had been making memoranda for his own address. Doubtless he worked on it on the train en route to Gettysburg on the eighteenth, but it appears that at least a rough draft of it had been finished previous to this time. That night at the home of Judge Wills, chairman of the committee in charge of the dedication and in whose home Lincoln was entertained while in Gettysburg, the President was working again on his address and took his manuscript to an adjoining home where Secretary of State Wm. H. Seward was staying for the night, in order that he might confer with Seward about it. The speech, according to Dr. Barton, who in one of his books has marshalled the facts in a convincing manner, was written six times at least, by Lincoln in his own hand. Five of the autographs are still available and an official printing of the one missing manuscript is yet on hand. The first, it appears, was written mainly in Washington before Lincoln left for Gettys-

burg; the second in the house of Judge Wills on the morning of the day the address was delivered; the third was written a few days later for use in the printed report; the fourth was written later at the request of Dr. Everett; the fifth and the sixth were prepared by request for use in publications. There are slight variations in all of these as well as variations between these and the stenographic reports of the address.

The sixth, according to Dr. Barton, was written by Lincoln when he knew it was to be preserved in a volume with somewhat wide circulation and is as nearly as it could then be made what he wished he had said. It is the version which now and for many years has been used in books and everywhere in print. When delivering it Mr. Lincoln had the manuscript in his hand—probably the second of the autographs now extant—but he did not read it, even if he looked at it at all. It is certain that he made changes in the phraseology while speaking, interpolating some words. The most notable of the interpolations were the words, "under God" in the clause "that this nation under God, shall have a new birth of freedom." The words "under God" do not appear in the first or second drafts, but appear in all the other drafts and in some of the stenographic reports published in the newspapers.

It is a wonderful short address, consisting of only 267 words and required less than three minutes to deliver.

In an article by George Ade, printed on the back cover

of Readers' Digest for February, 1934, entitled "What's the Use of Useless Words?", he made some comments which are of great interest in this connection. The following, including the first paragraph properly to introduce the second for our purposes, is quoted from the article:

"Before the typewriter came it was not easy for writers to be verbose. Mr. Dana's *Sun* rated brevity as a cardinal virtue and was the textbook of journalism. Every good reporter did his own copy-cutting. Death to stereotyped adjectives! Save the superlatives for a nobler occasion. These were Spartan rules, much like the rules which have made The Readers' Digest a privilege and a delight."

"I wonder how Guy de Maupassant would have made out with a dandy little portable? Solomon did pretty well with his Song of Songs, even if he couldn't click off a thousand words an hour. Lincoln never could have composed his Address at Gettysburg on a machine. The masterpieces were done by hand."

As Mr. Lincoln's address was so short, rather than to attempt to tell here the substance of it, I will repeat it in full. To be sure I might assume that each one of this group knows it by heart, and therefore that it is unnecessary for me to repeat it. Many people have memorized it, either in school days or since, and know it as well as they do the Lord's Prayer. But sometimes it is violent to assume even that people know the Lord's Prayer. You

may remember the story about the two tramps who got into an argument as to which one of them knew the most about the Bible. One offered to bet the other a quarter that he could repeat the Lord's Prayer. The other fellow took him up and they put up the quarters and the first tramp started in to repeat the Lord's Prayer as follows: "Now I lay me down to sleep*****". The other interrupted, saying: "That's all right, I am convinced you know it. Take the money."

In print, Mr. Lincoln's address cannot give readers the thrill I have received, on Lincoln's birthday several times at the programs given by the G. A. R., in their headquarters at the Public Library in Chicago, where "Comrade" Beam, now deceased, as I am informed, the Chaplain of the post, in accordance with a custom which I understand has been prevalent at these meetings for many years, recited Mr. Lincoln's address. "Comrade" Beam, of course, a veteran of the war, over 80 years old, dressed in his uniform of blue thrilled me as I am sure he did every one in the audience by his impressive recitation of this wonderful address. Another excellent recitation of it which I heard and shall never forget, was given a few years ago by the famous English actor, Charles Laughton, in "Ruggles of Red Gap." The address is as follows:

> "Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that

all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add to detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

The "few appropriate remarks" have been considered

a literary as well as an oratorical gem. Lord Curzon, Chancellor of University of Oxford, in an address on November 6, 1913, referred to this address and Lincoln's second Inaugural Address as being along with the toast of William Pitt after the victory at Trafalgar, the three "Supreme Masterpieces" of English eloquence.

It will be interesting to note some of the observations of those present at the dedication regarding these speeches. Some of the audience referred to Lincoln's address as "the few remarks" with which the President followed "the eloquent address" of Edward Everett. The edition of Harper's *Weekly*, in the issue of December 15, 1863, said —"The oration by Mr. Everett was smooth and cold*** The few words of the President were from the heart to the heart." In this connection I cannot refrain from repeating one contrast between the two addresses in addition to that of the length of the one and the brevity of the other. In Everett's oration there appears an effort to blame the seceding states and to hurl defiance at the driven-back foe! There appears also some resentment toward the Confederate leaders. But in Lincoln's "few appropriate remarks" there is no hate, no bitterness, no attempt to rouse passion. His magnanimity would not permit him to entertain such thoughts. As has been well said by Dr. Barton, "There is no apparent effort to keep these elements out of the speech; they are not in the address because they were not in the heart of Lincoln."

It is recorded that while the people had not thought of him as a native of Kentucky, Lincoln's pronunciation betrayed his origin. Speaking very slowly he tended to magnify his native intonation, according to Dr. Barton. To my knowledge native Kentuckians gone from Kentucky as long as twenty-seven years still have strangers hearing them talk surprise them by asking what part of Kentucky they came from. One would suppose, however, that leaving Kentucky as a boy Lincoln by 1863, when he was 54 years old, would not have exhibited to the extent reported the Kentucky drawl. That he did is additional evidence that Marse Henry Watterson was correct when he said, "Once a Kentuckian always a Kentuckian," whether it refers to a Kentuckian in spirit or in appearance and action.

Another interesting impression recorded of people who were present is that Lincoln stopped speaking just as they thought he was beginning. They thought he had hardly made a speech. Afterwards some of them told of *hearing* Everett and *seeing* Lincoln.

As is so well known, one of Lincoln's greatest characteristics was his ability as a story teller. In many of his speeches he used a yarn or incident with effect. But he did not tell a single incident in the Gettysburg Address. It would not serve his purpose at the time. In as few words as possible, he was stating what he believed the occasion required.

In "Essays and Observations," by Lord Hewart, Lord Chief Justice of England, there is an excellent chapter on "Modern Oratory." In one place, he says: "Although it is easy to contemplate modern oratory without enthusiasm, it does seem perhaps to exhibit one encouraging feature. As it grows more and more modern, it tends more to plain speech than did, for example, the rounded periods of early Victorian and late Georgian oratory. To disdain all ornament needs, to be sure, great courage. Only a perfect figure, it is said, can venture to go naked. But 'nuda veritas' is irresistible."

Although Lincoln's Gettysburg Speech was delivered long before this essay was written, his address comes well within this definition of modern oratory. It is a perfect figure unadorned. It is 'nuda veritas'. It is irresistible.

In praising the one of these addresses, however, we must not belittle the other. In remembering Lincoln at Gettysburg, let us not forget Everett was there, too. As Lincoln's was an ideal short address, Everett's was a model of the long address of early Victorian and late Georgian variety referred to by the Lord Chief Justice.

Lincoln and Everett each had his assignment to perform at Gettysburg and both were entitled to receipts in full for services performed satisfactorily in the superlative degree. What the one did the other could not have done, but both together could not have been excelled

doubtless by any two men who might have been selected. Each recognized the excellence of the other's performance. The President congratulated Everett, and Everett complimented the President on the platform there immediately after the addresses were finished. Later Dr. Everett wrote Mr. Lincoln a letter in which, among other things, he said: "Permit me also to express my great appreciation of the thoughts expressed by you with such eloquent simplicity and appropriateness at the consecration of the cemetery. I should be glad if I could flatter myself that I came as near the central idea of the occasion in two hours as you did in two minutes."

Mr. Lincoln told one of his intimates that he never received a compliment he prized more highly than that contained in the letter from Edward Everett. In reply he wrote Dr. Everett a letter, dated Executive Mansion, Washington, November 20, 1863, in which, among other things, he said to Dr. Everett:

"Your kind note of today is received. In our respective parts yesterday you could not have been excused to make a short address, nor I a long one. I am pleased to know that, in your judgment, the little I did say was not entirely a failure. Of course, I knew Mr. Everett would not fail; and yet, while the whole discourse was eminently satisfactory and will be of great value, there were passages in it which transcended my expectations."

Thus we see that each orator at Gettysburg, himself well able to judge, pronounced the effort of the other excellent and satisfactory. As no good speaker ever is, neither was entirely satisfied with the results of his own efforts. Many, however, of those who were present and heard what they said, knew and those of us who may read now the text of each speech as revised by the speaker before or after the event know that on a great occasion seventy-four years ago tomorrow, after adequate preparation, there were delivered to a great audience by two great orators, two truly great Gettysburg Addresses, in duration, respectively, Two Hours and Two Minutes.

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